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MOST BIRDS ARE BENEFICIAL;
ONLY A FEW ARE INJURIOUS

The sparrow is a beneficial bird, says the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, and should not be regarded as a pest. The single exception to the department's endorsement is the pesky English sparrow of that species, "usually a nuisance and often injurious," says the department in a booklet, Farm Help from the Birds, "it must be remembered that the introduced English sparrow is but one member of the large family of sparrows and its habits are by no means characteristic of the native species."

They are essentially seed eaters, the sparrows, but they consume also a fair proportion of insects, the department finds, and in general must be regarded as beneficial. Separating the sheep from the goats in the feathered kingdom of common knowledge to the farmer, the department places among the bad birds the jays, crows, ravens, and blackbirds, a corporal's guard compared with the army of good birds, of aid to the farmer, placed in the other classification. Even the bad denizens of the air have some good in them, says the department, and the damage they do the farmer is largely because of over-population in the feathered ranks. Of that class, the department says:

"It would seem a good policy to accord them the same treatment long given the common crow. The crow is not specially persecuted, neither is it protected. About the best that can be said of birds of this family is that on the average they do about as much good as harm."

Owls Perform Useful Service

"Owls as a group have long been persecuted by man but never has persecution been more unjust", says the Biological Survey. More than 50 varieties of owls feed on a great variety of rodents and have useful habits, the booklet continues. In Washington, D. C., the Survey recently determined what 675 barn owls had for dinner. Here is the menu, by variety and number of dishes consumed:

Meadow mice, 1,119; house mice, 452; house rats, 134; other small mammals, 3 per owl. And the service done man by the barn owl, the booklet says, is typical of that performed by hawks and owls in general. An occasional chicken is consumed, but this loss is far outweighed by the destruction of harmful rodents.